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FREE and IMPORTANT

DISQUISITIONS

CONCERNING THE

INSPIRATION ^{1016. f. 15}
₃

OF THE

HOLY SCRIPTURES;

Wherein is made appear,

That the Writers of the OLD and NEW
TESTAMENT were not inspired by the
HOLY GHOST, in the Sense, generally
understood;

THE

Difficulties of the Learned concerning the Text of the
HOLY SCRIPTURES ingeniously acknow-
ledged;

The pretended Necessity of, ORAL TRADITION
sufficiently overthrown;

AND,

Such a Middle Way pointed out, as is conceived most pro-
per to fix in Men's Minds, a just Esteem of the sacred
Writings, on a Solid Foundation.

Translated from the Original *French* of the Celebrated
M. *Le CLERC*.

L O N D O N:

Printed in the YEAR MDCCL

THE HISTORY OF

THE CITY OF LONDON

FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE CITY

TO THE PRESENT TIME

BY JOHN STOW

THE SECOND EDITION

REVISED AND CORRECTED

BY JOHN STOW

LONDON



LETTER

CONCERNING

INSPIRATION, &c.



YOU ask me, Sir, if our Friends do not suspect Mr. N— of being somewhat fallen into Deism? and are mighty solicitous about knowing, very particularly, his Thoughts concerning the Inspiration of the Holy Pen-Men; my Friend, from whom I received this Essay, has informed me nothing of his Opinion in other Matters, nor of his way of Life: And it is presumed, he can hardly be looked on as a Deist, for any thing he has said concerning the Inspiration the sacred Writers received from God. It is hoped, on the contrary, that he thinks, by this Method, he better answers the Deist's as well as Atheist's Objections to the Stile of the Holy Scriptures; that he himself is far enough from being of their Opinion will very evidently appear in the Course of this Essay.

B

We

We should be extremely cautious how we judge of the Extent of any Man's Opinion about religious Matters, from his particular Manner of explaining, or defending them; as if all who are incapable of defending their Religion *well*, had bad Designs; and seemingly defended it only, the more effectually to destroy it. The wicked *Vanini* designed, it is said, to prove there is no God, by pretending to shew that there is one. But it by no means follows, that all others, who defend or oppose any Opinion weakly, do the same. Many Writers, both Catholick and Protestant, have very injudiciously opposed their Adversaries Opinions, and as badly defended their own, which yet are not to be supposed guilty of ill Design. Were one to take an exact Account of all the Catholick Writers who have made impertinent Answers to Protestants, and have used Objections full as impertinent against them, it would fill some Volumes in Folio; and the Number of Protestant Authors, who have succeeded as ill, would amount to little less. And yet no one is surely so unjust to pretend that the generality of those Authors, on either side, have been each maintaining what they did not believe, or opposing what they did.

You know too well, Sir, the Frame and Constitution of the Mind of Man, to be
ignorant

ignorant, that it is capable of believing very sincerely, things the most ridiculous, nay and assenting, too, to things directly opposite. Should you set down to invent a Religion, ridiculous beyond Imagination, People would be found in *Asia*, embracing Opinions not more rational. You have read Mr. *Bernier's* Travels, and the History of the *Bramins*. What are your Thoughts of the Heathens of the great *Mogul's* Country, and of those renowned *Indian* Philosophers? Do you imagine, that the monstrous Principles of their *Theology* are not believed among them? I dare say, very few see the least Absurdity in them. You may say possibly, That the Blindness those People are under, is next to direct Foolishness; and that the *Europeans* are not to be judged of by the *Indians*. But are there not Christians, think you, who believe things absurd and against all Appearance? That Censure is passed upon several Roman Catholick Doctrines by the Protestants, viz. *Transubstantiation*, *Infallibility*, &c. And the Catholicks are not behind hand in making such like Reproaches on the Protestants.

The Catholicks are of Opinion, That several Units make more than a single one; and are so strong in the belief of it, that he must needs pass for a Fool among *them*, as well as *other Christians*, that would attempt

to deny it; and yet they believe that a Million of human Bodies, distinct from one another, make but One. How visible is this Contradiction? And yet this is their Opinion about the Body of Christ. Some there are, who believe, with great Certainty, That *God is not the Author of Sin*, &c. and at the same time assert, That Man was created designedly to fall into Sin, as a means to make God's Justice eminent, in punishing the many; and his Mercy, in pardoning the few. And yet to suppose God ordered Sin, on purpose to accomplish thereby his Ends, is certainly no less than to make him the Author of it. But the Frailty of Man's Mind suffers him not to see these Contradictions, when he has been so long accustomed to shut his Eyes, although they are so plainly presented to him.

Hence a Man may not only defend a bad Opinion that he believes, but he may believe Absurdities, and things contrary to one another unawares. And for that Reason our Friends suspect not Mr. N— to be a *Deist*, though others may think his Opinion favouring too much, those so called. But that you may judge for yourself, I send you here an Abridgment of what he says; which a Friend of mine sometime since imparted to me.

There

There are three kinds of things in Scripture, not ascribed to particular Revelation, viz. *Prophecies, Histories and Doctrines.*

As to the First; God made himself known to the Prophets in several ways; but they seem to be reducible to these three. *Visions* by Day or by Night; *bearing Voices*; *inward Inspiration.* It is not necessary to examine these things in themselves; we will only enquire after what manner they have written that which they were informed of, by these Visions, Voices, or Inspirations.

I. Of *Prophecies.* *Prophecies* have been written at the express Command of God, by the Prophets themselves, or by others. For it is uncertain, whether the Prophets themselves always wrote, or dictated only; or whether their Disciples collected and wrote them as exactly as Memory would suffer them. Which way ever it be, there is no doubt but God made known to the Prophets what we find in their Books, and that we ought to believe *St. Peter*, when he informs us, *Prophecy came not in old time by the Will of Man, but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

To tell us that which appeared to them in *Visions*, whether they themselves wrote it, or others who heard them tell it; nothing but a good Memory was requisite. A
Man

Man needs not Inspiration to relate faithfully what he has seen, especially when the Impression it made upon him was strong; as commonly was the Case of those to whom God vouchsafed any Vision. Hence every Prophet has his particular Stile; by which it appears, that what they had seen, they related, as they used to do other Matters. Their Stile was the same when they spake by the Command of God, as when they used their ordinary Discourse.

And we are to judge in the same way concerning the recital of the Words they heard. There needed only a faithful Memory to retain them. But we cannot be certain that they sometimes thought it not sufficient only to tell us the Sense, instead of the very Words they heard. When God told them the Name of a Person, it was necessary they should remember the Syllables of that Name; as when *Isaiab* was ordered to foretel that *Cyrus* should give the *Jews* Liberty to return into *Palestine*, it behoved *Isaiab* to remember the two Syllables, *Co-res*. But it is not likely, that in the rest of his Discourse, *Isaiab* related word for word all he heard. The Diversity of Stile moreover proves, that the Prophets expressed in their own way, the Sense of what they heard. For Example, the Difference between the Stiles of *Isaiab* and *Amos*: *Isaiab* high and lofty; *Amos* low and vulgar;

vulgar; and the many popular Expressions and Proverbs, which we see in this Prophet, who was a Shepherd, convinces us, that he expressed after his own manner what God had delivered to him. This is St. *Jerome's* Opinion in the Preface of his Commentary on this Prophet. *The Prophet Amos, says he, was skilful in Knowledge, not in Language; for the same Holy Spirit spoke in him that spoke by all the Prophets.* This Doctrine attributes clearly the *Expression* to the Prophets, and *the thing it self* to the Holy Spirit; which appears also by the Remark he makes on Chap. III. viz. *We told you that he uses the Terms of his own Profession: And because a Shepherd knows nothing more terrible than a Lion, he compares the Anger of God to Lions.* St. *Jerome* should have said, according to the common Opinion, that God made use, in speaking to *Amos*, of popular Terms, and suitable to his Profession; whereas he attributes plainly to the Prophet the Choice of the Terms in which the Prophecy is expressed. *That Words were dictated by God to the Prophets, (says Grotius) as it cannot be denied to have been done sometimes, so it does not seem to have been done always: And hence it is, that according to the Variety of the Times, and the Speakers, the Phrase of the Prophets is also different.*

It

It is generally asserted, that the Prophets recite the same Words they heard ; since they introduce God himself, speaking, *Thus saith the Lord, &c.* But it is always the Custom, both of the *Hebrews* and *Greeks*, to bring in those, whose Sense they relate, as speaking in their own Persons ; though in doing so, they tye not themselves to their Words. The different Manner in which the Decalogue is set down in *Exodus* and *Deuteronomy* ; although God is said to speak personally in both Places, is a very plain Example. God says, in *Exodus*, *Remember the Sabbath-day, &c.* In *Deuteronomy*, *Keep the Sabbath-day, &c.* It is in *Exodus*, *To keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, &c.* In *Deuteronomy*, *To keep it holy, as the Lord thy God commanded thee. Six days shalt thou labour, &c.* It is in *Exodus*, *Nor thy Cattle, &c.* In *Deuteronomy*, *Nor thine Ox, nor thine Ass, nor any of thy Cattle, &c.* And this Commandment ends thus, *That thy Man-Servant, and thy Maid-Servant, may rest as well as thou ; and remember that thou wast a Servant in the Land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty Hand, and a stretched-out Arm ; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day.* In *Exodus*, the Reason of keeping the Sabbath, is from the Creation of the World in six Days, without any mention of Slaves,

or

or the Slavery of *Egypt*. There are some other Differences in what follows, but they are inconsiderable. However, it appears by this, that either *Moses* in *Deuteronomy*, or the Author of the Book of *Exodus*, did not keep strictly to exact Words, as the *Jews* now do; though both these Authors bring in God speaking personally. *Grotius* has made this judicious Remark. *It is observable* says he, *that the Words in Exodus, were spoken by an Angel in the Name of God, but those in Deuteronomy, are the Words of Moses, repeating the same things; and that with such a Liberty, that sometimes he transposes Words; changes some for others of the same Signification; omits some, as known sufficiently by those gone before; and adds others by way of Interpretation. The same Liberty of changing Words is obvious, to a careful Reader, in other Places of Sacred Writ, as Gen. xvii. 4. compared with 7. Gen. xxiv. 17. compared with 43. Exod. xi. 4. compared with xii. 28. Exod. xxxii. 11, &c. compared with Deut. ix. 27. &c.* Now this shews, That we are not to catch at Words in Holy Writ, as some of the *Jews* do; who fancy that the Words in *Exodus*, and in *Deuteronomy*, were pronounced at one and the same Time. They think too, that where there is Transposition and changing the Order of what was said first, what last; that the last, importing the same Sense, were also said first.

first. There are in the Sacred Histories, a sufficiency of Miracles, that stands not in need of our inventing new ones without Necessity; and such as are of no Use.

If you desire any further Proof, that this manner of speaking personally, denotes not that they are the proper Words of him that is introduced speaking after this Manner, you may only look into the Gospels, where the Evangelists ever make our Saviour speak personally, and yet recite not the very Words he made use of. For, beside that Christ spoke *Syriac* or *Chaldee*, there is oft great Difference between their Recitals. The Holy Spirit never tied it self up to Words, as many of our Divines do now. He prompted the Sacred Pen-men to give us only the true Sense of the Words that God made use of, whereby the Prophets might understand his Will; and it is only in respect to the Sense and to the Matter, that the Apostles assure us, that they were inspired by God.

The third kind of *Prophecy*, or manner, by which God made known his Will, was inward Inspiration, without Vision, or Voice. Two different sorts of which may easily be conceived. For God might inspire *Prophecies* or *Predictions* word for word, as the Prophets were to pronounce them: As when there was Occasion to speak of some Name,
unknown

unknown before to the Prophet: Or he might inspire the Sense only, which they were at Liberty to express in their own way; as most commonly it happened; the first Occasion being very rare. And when any one apprehends a Sense distinctly, it seems to me not very difficult for him to express it faithfully. And we must suppose, that the Prophets, full of the Thoughts God had inspired them with, had very clear and distinct *Ideas* thereof: And this will easily be understood, if we but consider, that God inspired them with Matters easy to be conceived, and proportioned to the Understanding of all the World; at least as to the literal Sense. It happened also sometimes, that without inspiring either Words or Sense, God drew from the Mouth of some Persons, Prophecies which those who spoke them understood in another Sense, and thought them not to be Prophecies. He threw them into certain Circumstances, and involved them in certain Events, which made them say things that were really Predictions, without their knowing them to be such. Such was that Prediction of *Caiaphas*, when he says, *That it was better that one Man should die for the People, than that the whole Nation should perish.* Now he said not that of himself, says St. John, but being High Priest that Year, he Prophecied. To speak properly, God inspi-

red him not with those Words, it was the Nature of the Business only they were about in the *Sanhedrim* forced them from him. They were afraid of Jesus drawing all the People to him, and enterprising something against the *Roman* Authority, which would not fail of sending a Puissant Army into *Palistine*, which would totally waste it. *Caia-phas* thereupon urges a common Maxim in Politicks, *That it were better to destroy one Man, though he were innocent, than to expose the whole State to utter Desolation.* In *Caia-phas's* Sense there is nothing Prophetic or Inspired. But in the Gospel-sense, what *Caia-phas* said, signified more than he intended, and contained a true Prophecy. And more Predictions of this Nature very likely may be found in the Old Testament.

For Instance: *David* says many things both of himself and his Enemies, without the least Thought of prophecying, which contains, nevertheless, Predictions of that which was to happen to Christ and his Enemies. He says *Psal. xli. 10. He that ate of my Bread, hath lift up his Heel against me.* He meant surely *Achitophel* or some other of those who were risen against him in *Absalom's* Conspiracy, and speaks plainly of a Thing happened to himself. It is this very Affair that inspires him, if one may so say with these Words; which betoken what should befall Jesus Christ by the Treachery

Treachery of one of his Disciples, as appears by *John* xiii. 18. The Author of the *lxxixth*, and *cixth Psalms*, whether it were *David*, or some other, did not probably think of fore-telling what should one Day befall a Disciple of the *Messiah*, when he cursed his Enemies: And yet St.

Peter in the *Acts* applies some Acts i. 20.
 Words of these *Psalms* to *Judas*. There needs no great Penetration to see that the Author did not pretend to speak of *Judas*, and that he was not immediately inspired by the good and merciful Spirit of God, when he said, *Set thou a wicked Man over him, and let Satan stand at his Right-hand: When he shall be judged, let him be condemned, and let his Prayer become Sin: Let his Days be few, and let another take his Office: Let his Children be Fatherless, and his Wife a Widow: Let his Children continually be Vagabonds and beg; let them seek their Bread also out of their desolate Places: Let the Extortioner catch all that he hath, and let the Stranger spoil his Labour: Let there be none to extend Mercy unto him; neither let there be any to favour his Fatherless Children: Let his Posterity be cut off, and in the Generation following let their Name be blotted out: Let the Iniquity of his Fathers be remembered with the Lord; and let not the Sin of his Mother be blotted out, &c.* Nothing is more plain that these are the Words of a Man full of excessive Choler, of an extreme Desire to be

be revenged. Now the Law of *Moses* permitted no more than the Gospel, to *wish* ill, or *do* it, to Children, in Revenge of the Injury received from their Parents. Yet some famous Divines have put in the Title of this Psalm, *That David, As A TYPE OF JESUS CHRIST, being driven on by a singular Zeal, prays that Vengeance may be executed on his Enemies.* And where do they find that Jesus Christ curses his Enemies at any such Rate? Have they forgot the Words that proceeded from his dying Mouth, in Favour of the most wicked Race that ever was? Were not those that crucified him, his greatest Enemies, and the most obstinate Adversaries of the Gospel? And, far from making such Imprecations against them, did not he pray to his Father to forgive them? Has he not ordered us to imitate him, and to pray for those that persecute us? 'Tis past my Understanding how *David*, as a *Type of Jesus Christ*, could make such horrible Imprecations against his Enemies.

I must own myself a Stranger to the Christian Religion, if such cursing and wishing to be revenged is permitted, as is found in the Author of this Psalm, and those of divers others; as that of *Psalm cxxxvii. O Daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall be he that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us: Happy shall be he that taketh and*

and dasheth thy little Ones against the Stones! God forbid that any should desire to dash out the Brains of Infidel's Children! Yet these Psalms are indifferently sung in Protestant Churches, without the least Notice taken that they are not all equally inspired. Upon asking a Divine once, how he could sing Psalms full of such Imprecations? He slightly answered me, that the Use of them was lawful against the Enemies of the Church, and that for his Part he made that Application to them, when these Psalms were sung. Thus you see what the *Jewish* Opinion of the Inspiration of Words, and of the Divinity of each Verse of the Scripture produces.

Another Sort of *Prophecies*, consisted not in fore-telling things to come, but in explaining the Scripture, and in composing readily Hymns to the Honour of God. The Hymn of the blessed Virgin *Mary*, and some others, are Examples of these in the New Testament. It seems as if there went only Piety and Zeal to the composing them: At least it is very conceivable, that a pious, zealous Man may now-a-days praise God in that manner, without any Preparation. Great part of the Psalms seems to have been thus composed, as also divers other Songs in the Old Testament. The Psalms, where the Verses, or Pauses, begin with

with the Letters of the *Hebrew* Alphabet, seem to have been composed at more Leisure. For this Regularity shews that there was Meditations and Pains used, as is in Acrosticks. See *Psalm* cxix. and the *Lamentations* of *Jeremy*. We see too, that in these sort of Works, the Holy Writers do not speak in the Name of God, nor begin their Discourse with *Thus saith the Lord*. We must confess that the Authors of these pious Songs were full of the Holy Spirit, when they composed them; that is to say, it was a Spirit of Piety that carried them to take Pains in those Compositions; and in that Sense we may say, that they were inspir'd by God, though not so immediately as Predictions. The Spirit of God is often understood by the Spirit of Holiness, that is to say, a Disposition of Spirit conformable to the Commandments of God; as the Learned have observed.

I shall now remark, briefly, in what manner the sacred Histories have been written: And, in treating of Doctrines, I shall speak of that sort of *Prophecy* that consists in explaining the Holy Scripture.

II. Of the Histories in the Holy Scripture.

It is certain that the Historians of the Old and New Testament, were pious Persons; who had never writ those Histories, but

but from a true Principle of Piety. Not to satisfy our Curiosity did they undertake those Works, but to show that the providential Care of God hath always attended good People, and inflicted Punishments upon the wicked; to give us Examples of Piety and Virtue, and to inform us of certain Matters of Fact, upon which our Faith is founded; and of the Precepts which God gave to Jews and Christians, by the Ministry of his Prophets, Apostles, Angels themselves, and even of his own Son. We are also to believe that they have given us the Truth of the History to the best of their Knowledge, without adding or subtracting any thing with Design to deceive us. And as they were thoroughly informed of the chief Matters of Fact which they relate, having either seen them, or taken them out of good Records, we may be confident that in the Main of the History, they relate nothing that is not exactly true. These Qualifications alone are sufficient to oblige us to give Credit to them. An honest Historian, who is well informed of what he relates, is worthy of Credit: And, if you add thereto, that he has suffered Death in maintaining the Truth of his History, as the Apostles did, who were put to Death for maintaining that they had seen and heard all which the Gospel tells us of Jesus Christ; in that case, not only the History will be

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worthy

worthy of Credit, but they who shall refuse their Belief, can pass for no other than Fools, or the most obstinate Persons. In this manner we are fully assured of the Truth of the New Testament ; that is to say, That there was a Jesus, who did divers Miracles, who was raised from the Dead, and ascended up into Heaven, and who taught the Doctrine we find in the Gospels. And this Jesus having born Witness to the History of the *Jews*, we cannot doubt its Truth, at least as to the principal Matters.

To call this in Question, is absolutely renouncing Christianity. But People generally believe two things which seem to me groundless ; unless they rest them upon *Jewish* Tradition, a Principle extremely uncertain. They believe, first, the sacred Historians to be inspired with the Things themselves : And next, that they were inspired also with the Terms in which they have expressed them. In a word, that the sacred History was dictated word for word by the holy Spirit, and that the Authors, whose Names it bears, were no other than Secretaries of that Spirit, who wrote exactly as it dictated.

As to what concerns the Inspiration of Historical Matters of Fact, I observe, First, That as they suppose it without bringing any

any positive Proof, a Man may with good Reason reject their Supposition. They say only, that if it were not so, we could not be perfectly certain of the Truth of the History. But, beside that a Consequence cannot undeniably prove a Fact; and that it may happen that one cannot disprove a Consequence, although that which is pretended to be proved thereby be not true; I affirm that it is false, that we cannot be perfectly certain of the main Substance of a History, unless we suppose it inspired. We are, for Example, perfectly certain that *Julius Cæsar* was killed in the Senate by a Conspiracy, whereof *Brutus* and *Cassius* were the Chiefs; without believing that they who have informed us were inspired. The Histories of all Nations, furnish us with Matters not to be doubted of, without being guilty of Folly and Self-conceit; and yet without supposing that these Histories were writ by divine Inspiration.

In the second place, This Opinion supposes, without any Necessity, a Miracle, of which the Scripture it self is silent. To relate faithfully a Matter of Fact, which a Man has seen and well observed, requires no Inspiration. The Apostles needed not Inspiration to tell what they had seen, and what they had heard Christ say. For that Memory and Honesty are abundantly sufficient:

Neither had those Authors who writ things that came to pass before their Time, as the Author of the Books of *Chronicles*, any more need of Inspiration for copying of good Records. And as for those who made the Records, no more was requisite, than that they should be well informed of what they set down, either by their Eyes, or by their Ears, or by faithful Witnesses. It will be said, perhaps, that according to this Opinion, the Faith built upon the Scripture will be no other than a Faith purely *human*, because it will be grounded only upon human Testimonies. To this I answer, That neither do we know, any more than by a *human Faith*, that the Book which we call the Gospel of St. *Matthew* is truly his. It is nothing but the uniform Consent of Christians, since the beginning of Christianity to this Day, that makes us believe it; which in truth is, no more than a Testimony purely *human*. We do not believe it because we are assured by an Oracle from Heaven, that this Book is truly that Apostle's; but just as we believe that the *Eneid* is truly *Virgil's*, and the *Iliad* *Homer's*. But that which they here call *human Faith* is of as great Certainty, as the Demonstrations of Geometry. And even *Divine Faith* it self, as it is called, is built upon this Certainty. For, in truth, we do not believe in Jesus Christ, but be-
cause

cause we are persuaded that the History of him is a true one. And how do we know this? Because those Eye-witnesses who wrote, have suffered Death to maintain the Truth of their Testimonies. And how can we be certain of their being Eye-witnesses, and of their suffering Death rather than deny what they asserted? By History; that is, by the Testimony of Men, affirming it to us constantly from the Time the Christian Religion was established, to the Age in which we live. *Human Faith* then is found to be the Foundation of *Divine Faith*; and we need not fear the Weakness of this Foundation. For without being less than a Man, and reasoning as little as a Brute, it can never be disputed; as has often been made appear by the Learned, who have vindicated the Truth of the Christian Religion.

In the third place, The common Opinion is contrary to the Testimony of the sacred Writers themselves. St. Luke begins his Gospel thus. *Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in Order a Declaration of those things, which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were Eye-witnesses, and Ministers of the Word: It seemed good to me also, having had perfect Understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee*

thee, in Order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the Certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed. You may here observe a Confirmation of what I have been saying, and a full Proof that St. *Luke* learned that which he tells us not by Inspiration, but Information from those who had perfect Knowledge of it. Now if you grant that St. *Luke* has given a faithful Relation of the Life and Discourses of Jesus, without a particular Inspiration, we must receive what he tells us with a firm Belief in his Fidelity; you can make no Difficulty in granting the same concerning the rest of the sacred Historians. If any of them should have been inspired, certainly the Evangelists. If you are for another Example of a History without Inspiration, you may read the Books of *Kings*, and *Chronicles*, which are Extracts out of publick Registers, and particular Writings of several Prophets, to whom the Authors every where refer the Reader.

Lastly, The Historians of the Scripture seem not to be inspired, from the Contradictions found in many Circumstances of the Histories related. The Evangelists agree perfectly in what relates to the Main of the History of Jesus Christ; but some Circumstances may be found wherein they disagree; a clear Proof that every Particular was not inspired.

inspired. For although the Circumstances in which they differ are of small Consequence, yet had the Holy Spirit dictated every thing to them, as is pretended, there would have been a perfect Agreement in every thing: These Circumstances as well as the Main of the History being alike known to God. St. Matthew for instance, says, *That Judas, repenting that he had delivered our Lord to the Jews, threw the Money into the Temple; that going away he hanged himself; and that the Priests, having gathered up the Money, bought therewith a Field.* St. Luke in the *Acts* brings in Peter, saying, *That Judas, after having purchased a Field with the Reward of Iniquity, falling headlong, burst asunder in the midst, insomuch that his Bowels gushed out.* A manifest Contradiction this, which the Learned in vain endeavour to reconcile. And many other such are to be found.

But you will say, this lessens the Authority of the Evangelists, who, if they could be deceived in any thing, might, for any Security we have, be deceived in every thing? I answer to that in the Words of Grotius; *Even this it self ought to free these Writers from all Suspicion of Deceit; as those who testify Falshoods so agree in their Stories, that there may not seem to be any Difference.* But if because of any small Disagreement, tho' it could not

not be reconciled, whole Books must loose their Credit, what Book, especially what History, would deserve to be believed? Whereas the Authority of Polibius and Halicarnassensis, and Livy, and Plutarch, in whom such things are found, as to the Main, stand unshaken among us. St. Chrysostom also in his first Homily on St. Matthew, very plainly assures us, that God permitted the Apostles to fall into these small Contrarieties, that we might see there was no Agreement to feign a History at Pleasure; and that we might more readily believe them in the Main of the History. A Man that has seen most of the Things he relates, can hardly be deceived: But he easily may be in some Circumstances of Things which he has not seen.

A fifth Proof might be here added from *Grotius*, in his Notes on the *Truth of the Christian Religion*, lately cited. It is this, 'That the Evangelists, in setting down a certain Time, do not very nicely determine it; because they had not Knowledge precise enough to set down the Number of Days or Months.' See *Luke* i. 56. iii. 23. *John* ii. 6. vi. 10, 19. xix. 14. You find in those Places, *About a certain Time*; or, *About a certain Number*: Which shews very plainly, that the History was not dictated immediately by the Holy Spirit, who knew for certain, the exact Number and Time in question.

Clear

Clear then is it, in my Judgment, that the Things were not inspired; nor consequently the Words; which are less considerable than the Things. A certain Sense, and not certain Terms are the Rule of our Faith. And the matter is not what Words we make use of, provided we stray not from the Doctrine which God has revealed. Those who read the Originals, are in no better way of being saved, than those that can read only the Translations. For no Translation is so false, but that taken in gross, it expresses clearly enough all that is necessary to Salvation: Otherwise it would be necessary for all Christians to learn *Hebrew* and *Greek*, which is altogether impossible; and we must exclude from Salvation, almost all those who have made profession of the Christian Religion in our *Western* Parts, from the Apostolic Times, to the Age we live in.

And Providence also which has preserved these Holy Books, to lead us in the way of Salvation, for so many Ages after the Death of the Writers of them, has preserved inviolably nothing but the Sense. It has suffered Men to put in synonymous Words one for another; and not prevented a great many Varieties from slipping, little considerable as to the Sense, but remarkable as to the Words and Order. In

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St.

St. Matthew, for Example, there is above a thousand different Readings in less than eleven hundred Verses; but of which there is not perhaps fifty, that can make any change in the Sense; and that change too but in Matters of small Importance to Piety. If God had esteemed it necessary, for the Good of his Church, that the sacred Historians should have been inspired with the Terms they ought to use, he would undoubtedly have taken care to preserve them. It is therefore obvious, that he designed principally only to preserve the Sense.

Thus then neither the Words, nor the Things, have been inspired into the Authors of the sacred History; though in the Main that History is very true in the principal Facts. It may be, that in certain inconsiderable Circumstances, some Fault may be found; as appears sufficiently by the contradictory Passages. It is true, that some have strained hard to reconcile those Passages, as I have already observed; but it is after so violent and constrained a Fashion, and there are such different Opinions about these Reconciliations, that if we examine the thing never so little, without Prejudice, we shall find that the Learned trouble themselves to no purpose; and that they had much better acknowledge ingenuously, that there are some

some Contradictions in things of small Importance.

Nay further, I know some that believe we ought not to receive all the *Jewish* Histories, without Distinction, for true Histories. They say we should except the Book of *Esther*. And it is true, that if *Abasuerus*, of whom the Book of *Esther* speaks, be *Ochus* that reigned after *Artaxerxes Mnemon*, this Book would have been written at such a Time as there was no Prophet in *Israel*. But altho' Mr. *Cappel* pretend that *Abasuerus* is the same with Ωχ^{ος}, his conjecture is not unquestionable. They pretend also, that this History has all the Characters of a History made at Pleasure. I shall not examine that at present. But however, there is no Heresy in rejecting a Book of the *Jewish* Canon; as neither is it to reject one of our own; at least, the Protestants have not called a *Lutheran* an *Heretick*, for having said that the Epistle of St. *James* is an *Epistle of Straw*; no more than they have many of the Learned, for not receiving the Second Epistle of St. *Peter*, which a famous Critick stiles, † *A Fiction of some ancient Christian mis-employing his leisure Time*. The *Jewish Sanhedrim* may easily have received into their Canon Books that had no divine Authority.

† *Commentum veteris Christiani otio suo abutentis. Jos. Scaliger.*

To come now to the Doctrines which are in the Holy Scriptures, and not there attributed to a particular Revelation; I shall begin with examining those Writings of the Apostles, and afterwards those of the Old Testament.

It is commonly thought, that the Apostles, as well as Prophets, were inspired both as to Words and Things; yet with this Difference, that the Prophets were not always inspired, but only when God ordered them to speak to the People in his Name. Whereas the Apostles were always inspired, without being ravished into Extasies, as the Prophets were before their prophesying. This Opinion is founded upon the Promise that Christ made his Apostles to send them the Holy Spirit, which he performed on the Day of *Pentecost*. The Words of Christ are, *John xvi. 13. When he, the Spirit of Truth, shall come, he will guide you into all Truth.* He says also elsewhere to his Apostles; *When they bring you into the Synagogues, and unto Magistrates, and Powers, take ye no thought how or what things ye shall answer, or what ye shall say; for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same Hour what ye ought to say, Luke xii. 11.* These are two the most formal Passages that can be quoted in this Matter. It is fitting that we should give them an attentive Examination, to see if they prove what they are

are produced for ; *viz.* ' That the Apo-
 ' stles were honoured with the continual
 ' Presence of the Holy Ghost, who dicta-
 ' ted to them all that they said in Matter
 ' of Religion ; insomuch that all their
 ' Words ought to be considered as Oracles.

To begin with the latter ; I observe first,
 ' That he does not promise a perpetual Inspi-
 ration, but only upon certain Occasions ;
viz. when the Apostles should be brought
 before the Tribunals of Judges. So that if
 there were nothing else in it, this Passage
 would not at all favour the common Opini-
 on. But there is more in it ; for it wholly
 destroys it. If Jesus Christ had determined
 to give his Apostles the Holy Spirit to in-
 spire them perpetually, he would not have
 told them singly, that they should not trou-
 ble themselves for what they had to say be-
 fore the Judges, because then the Spirit
 should speak in them. But he would have
 said that they need not fear that at any Time
 they should want Words, because the Holy
 Spirit should accompany them without cea-
 sing, as well before the Powers of the
 World, as when they should speak to the
 People. If a Man had a Design to supply
 another with Money for all his Expences ;
 would he say to him, Do not trouble your-
 self to get Money for the Journies you are
 to take, for you shall then be supplied ? He
 would rather say to him, doubtless, that he
 should

should not fear the want of Money, because he should be supplied constantly for all his Occasions. A Man promises not for a particular Occasion, what he intends to give alike at all Times. And when a Man makes a particular Promise, it is a plain sign that he intends to perform it but upon particular Occasions.

In the second Place ; as I acknowledge that the Apostles may have had prophetick Inspirations on certain Occasions, and that in effect they have had them ; so I confess that I find my self tempted to believe, that by these Words, *The Holy Ghost shall teach you in that Hour what ye ought to say* : Or, as St. Matthew has expressed it, *It is not ye that speak, it is the Spirit of your Heavenly Father that speaks in you* ; I am, I say, induced to believe, that by these Words Christ meant no more than this ; viz. The Spirit of Courage and Holiness, which the Gospel produces in your Hearts, will teach ye what ye ought to say. That is, That the Apostles had no more to do, but to believe in the Gospel, to be assured that the Disposition of Spirit which that Heavenly Doctrine would give them, would never let them want Words ; not even when they were to defend themselves before the Tribunals of the greatest Powers. That which inclines me to this Explication of Christ's Words, is, that in comparing this Promise with the Event,

Event, it seems not to have been performed in any other Sense than that which I have now observed; and that neither ought it to be interpreted so strictly, as if on these Occasions a Word might not slip from the Apostles, that was not conformable to the Spirit of the Gospel.

St. *Luke* tells us, *Acts* xxiii. that St. *Paul* having been brought before the *Sanhedrim*, began to speak after this manner; *Men and Brethren, I have lived in all good Conscience before God until this Day.* Here is nothing yet that any one might not say without Inspiration; as neither is there any thing but what is conformable to the Gospel. But what follows is a Sign of Passion, where-with St. *Paul* was neither inspired by the Spirit of Prophecy, nor the patient Spirit of the Gospel. At that Word, says St. *Luke*, *Ananias the High-Priest commanded them that stood by, to smite him on the Mouth.* The Apostle, provoked by this Injustice, answers him in great Heat, *God shall smite thee, thou whited Wall. For fittest thou to judge me according to the Law, and commandest thou me to be smitten contrary to the Law? And they that stood by, says St. Luke, said to Paul, Revilest thou God's High-Priest? Then said Paul, I wist not Brethren that he was the High-Priest: For it is written, Thou shalt not speak Evil of the Ruler of thy People.* It is plain,

plain, me-thinks, that if the Spirit of Prophecy had inspired St. *Paul* with the beginning of this Discourse; it did not with the Answer he made the *High-Priest*, nor with the Excuse he made afterward when they told him he was the *High-Priest* that he spoke to. He gave Sentence against himself by his Answer, supposing that he had known him who ordered him to be smitten. And the Excuse itself is plainly but a bad one; because the Gospel allows no reviling any Man, whether a Magistrate, or a private Man. *Jesus Christ*, says St. *Peter*, *has suffered for us, leaving us an Example that we should follow his Steps; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatned not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

Neither do I believe that the Spirit of Prophecy inspired St. *Paul* with what he said afterward: At least there is no Body who could not have said as much, without Inspiration. Now St. *Paul* knowing, says the Historian, *that the one Part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, cried out in the Council, Men and Brethren, I am a Pharisee, the Son of a Pharisee; of the Hope and Resurrection of the Dead, I am called in Question.* This Expression also of St. *Luke*, (Paul knowing) it evidently implies, that his
Speech

Speech was an Effect of his Prudence, rather than of prophetic Inspiration.

I am not the first that has made such-like Observations. St. *Jerome* in his Dialogue against the *Pelagians*, Lib. 3. brings in *Atticus*, who bears the Part of an Orthodox Doctor, speaking of St. *Paul*; *Do you think St. Paul, at that Time when he writ, (the Cloak which I left at Troas, when thou comest bring with thee, and the Books, but especially the Parchments) did think of the Heavenly Mysteries, and not of the things useful to human Life, and necessary to the Body, &c? The Apostle is struck by an Officer, and he falls foul upon the High-Priest that commanded him to be smitten: God shall smite thee thou whited Wall. Where is that Patience of our Saviour, who, as a Lamb led to the Slaughter opened not his Mouth, but answered mildly to him that struck him? If I have spoken Ill, convince me of the Ill; but if Well, why do you strike me? We do not detract from the Apostle, but we declare the Glory of our Lord; who suffering in the Flesh, overcame the Difficulties and Weaknesses of the Flesh. Not to mention what he says in another Place, Alexander, the Copper-smith, did me much Evil; the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will reward him in that Day. It is true, St. *Jerome* elsewhere disapproves a Part of that which he here makes his Orthodox Doctor*

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speak;

Speak? but it is plain, at least, that one might speak it without being guilty of Heresy.

Lastly; When we examine the Discourses which we have of Christ's Disciples before different Judges, we may easily perceive that they speak with much Piety and Courage; but they seem not to say any thing which any one might not as well say without Inspiration. If we read the Histories of those that have been put to Death for Religion in the last Ages, we shall find many that were not Prophets, making excellent Discourses at their Trials, without any previous Preparation. St. Stephen was full of the Gospel-Spirit, when he made the Harangue we read in *Acts* vii. It seems nevertheless, that he therein mixed divers Circumstances of History, which were nothing to the Purpose of the Matter he was speaking about; and which neither can tolerably be reconciled with the History of the Old Testament. And indeed very learned Men have been of Opinion, that St. Stephen's Memory failed him. Mr. Cappel in his *Spicilegium* on Verse 16. says; *It is certain that in this place we should read ὁ τῷ Ἀβραάμ, and understand ἐ-γὼν, that it might not be said Abraham, but his Grandchild Jacob bought this Monument. Or we may say, that Stephen by the fault of his Memory, confounded two Faëts that were somewhat*

somewhat alike, to wit, the Purchase made by Abraham, Gen. xxiii. with that made by Jacob, Gen. xxxiii.

However, it is no way incongruous, that by the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, we should understand the Spirit of Holiness and Constancy, which the Gospel gives; or such a Disposition of Mind, as is an Effect of our Faith. We know it is a manner of speaking common in the Old and New Testament; and that the *Hebrews* by the *Spirit of Jealousy*, the *Spirit of Stupidity*, the *Spirit of Fear*, the *Spirit of Courage*, the *Spirit of Meekness*, &c. mean the different Dispositions of Mind, that render a Man Jealous, Stupid, Fearful, Couragious, Meek, &c. The Criticks have observed this long ago.

But you will here once again take Notice, that when I say the Disciples of Christ had not prophetic Inspirations, for answering before the Tribunal of Judges, to the Accusations brought against them; I do not mean thereby that it never so fell out; but only that ordinarily they spoke without particular Inspiration. I conceive indeed, that if one of them had appeared before a Judge, whose Language he naturally understood not, it would have been necessary that God should have dictated to him the proper

Words he was to make Use of. And I doubt not but God has often done even that, in favour of such of the Apostles as have preached the Gospel to barbarous Nations beyond the Limits of the *Roman* Empire, and perhaps too sometimes amongst the *Romans* and *Greeks*.

However it be, it seems to me that if what I have been saying be duely considered, it must be granted that the Passages of St. *Luke* and St. *Matthew*, where Christ promises his Spirit to his Disciples, are not strong enough to render the common Opinion indisputable.

We have now gone thro', Sir, about half the Writing which was given me concerning the Thoughts of Mr. N— on this Subject. A Subject, it were extremely to be wished, that some able and judicious Person would undertake to handle thoroughly, in Opposition to our Author, but without Heat and Passion. This Opinion is maintained by Proofs and Arguments so strong, that though I am sensible it may be rendered very odious, and that malicious Consequences may be drawn from it; yet must I confess I know not by what Principles it can be overthrown. And what gives this Author yet more Advantage, is, That this Matter has been so little handled, that all the Writings upon the
Scripture

Scripture to this Day afford us scarce any Light therein. A Man must fetch all out of his own Stock, to answer him. And it is no small trouble to have one's Mind continually exercised in clearing up the Difficulties of a Subject so little known, and giving clear Principles in so obscure a Matter.

I should gladly be informed, Sir, of any in your Province, or elsewhere, that would undertake to clear it; for none of my Friends that I know of will engage in it. If you could prevail with any learned and moderate Divine to take that Task in hand, without that railing, which Divines are so prone to, when they know not which way to answer their Antagonist, you would infinitely oblige those who have read this Piece.

We shall now examine that Passage of St. John, *When the Spirit of Truth shall come, he will lead you into all Truth.* Interpreters observe, that we must not understand by *All Truths*, any others than those which the Apostles being ignorant of, made it necessary for them to know, that they might be able to acquit themselves of their Charge. They received not the Holy Spirit, for instance, to learn the Being of a God; nor to be instructed in the Mathematicks. The first they already knew, the other they had no need of.

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Most Interpreters think these Words denote such a perpetual Assistance of the Holy Spirit, as made the Apostles absolutely infallible. To know whether they have judged right, we must look into the Accomplishment of the Promise; which if it agrees not with this Explanation of our Saviour's Words, we must try for another Sense of it, and endeavour to find out wherein the Infallibility of the Apostles consists.

It appears from a Story *Acts* xv. that the Apostles did not pass in their own Time for Persons, whose every Word was an Oracle, as they are now reputed to have done. Some *Jews* converted to the Christian Religion, not being able to shake off their ancient Opinion concerning Ceremonies, would have had the *Gentiles* circumcised: *St. Paul*, and *St. Barnabas* were against this; but their Authority was not sufficient to put to silence the judaizing Christians; although *St. Paul* was no less an Apostle than those chosen by our Lord himself while he was on Earth, yet they would not believe him. The Church at *Jerusalem* must be consulted.

Again, the Apostles and Elders of the Church, assembled to examine and determine this Affair, dispute a great while before

fore they agree upon it; not till after they had heard *St. Peter*, *St. Paul*, *St. Barnabas*, and *St. James*, did the Assembly come to a Resolution. If they had been indued with the Spirit of Infallibility, such as we conceive of it now-a-days, they would have been all instantaneously of one Mind; and it would have been sufficient to have charged one of them to give out the Oracle in the Name of the whole Assembly.

Before that, there happened likewise, another thing which *St. Luke* relates, *Acts* x. whence it is very evident, that the Holy Ghost received on the Day of *Pentecost*, had not taught them all they should have Occasion to know, (so far was it from rendering them at first infallible) and that they were not then considered as Persons in no danger of falling into Error, as they have been since accounted; *St. Peter* stood in need of a Vision, as appears by the Story of *Cornelius the Centurion*, to learn that he ought not to scruple preaching the Gospel to the *Gentiles*; although Christ had ordered his Apostles before his Ascension, to preach the Gospel unto all Creatures; whereby *Gentiles* as well as *Jews* were clearly denoted.

St. Peter obeying the express Order which he received from God, to preach the Gospel to *Cornelius*, had no sooner returned to *Jerusalem*, but the faithful Ones of the Circumcision,

cumcision, not dreaming that his Apostleship rendered him infallible dispute with him; and tell him, after a manner that shows that the Infallibility which we now attribute to him, was to them unknown, *Thou wentest unto Men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.*

Many Years probably after that, *Peter* being at *Antioch*, had not courage enough to maintain boldly, that the *Jews* might eat with the *Gentiles* without Scruple. For before that certain Persons came from *James*, he did eat with the *Gentiles*; but when they were come he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the Circumcision: And the other *Jews* dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that *St. Paul* observing, that they walked not uprightly, was obliged to tell *Peter* before them all, *If thou being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?* It is said that *St. Peter* was guilty of a Fault only in his Conduct, and not in his Doctrine; that he believed and maintained the same with *St. Paul*, but that on this Occasion he dissembled his Opinion; and that he did not otherways constrain the *Gentiles* to live as the *Jews*, but in abstaining to eat with them. The *Gentiles*, say they, seeing that *St. Peter* did not eat with them because they were uncircumcised,

cised, did, by Reason of this his Conduct, believe themselves obliged to be circumcised, and consequently to observe the other Ceremonies of the Law. They looked upon it as a Sin to continue uncircumcised, because St. *Peter* forbore to live familiarly with them on that Account; and on the contrary, that it was a Duty to observe the Circumcision. So that it was by his Conduct only that St. *Peter* forced them to live as *Jews*. And indeed it is true, that efficaciously engaging any one to do a Thing, after what manner soever it be, we are said to force the Person to do it. See *Gen.* xix. 3. *Luke* xxiv. 19.

I believe really that this is the best Explanation. But it proves clearly, that the metaphysical Infallibility which is attributed to the Apostles, is not of apostolick Tradition. For, in truth, to dissemble a true Doctrine when they ought to preach it, and to engage People in an Error by their Conduct, can be no less than a human Weakness, and which becomes not those who are looked upon as the simple Instruments of the Holy Spirit speaking by their Mouths. St. *Peter's* Conduct gave the *Gentiles* to understand, as well as if he had told it them, that they must observe the Circumcision; and to give them to understand it by forbearing to eat with them, was almost the same Thing as to tell it them by Word of Mouth. Nay

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more, it is not unlikely that St. *Peter* believed that this Diffimulation was lawful, as well as St. *Barnabas*, and the other *Jews* who had followed his Example; otherwise it is not credible that such pious Men, who were the first Ministers of the Gospel, would have done it. And so we must confess that they were guilty of some Weakness even in Doctrine, although they soon recanted; nor was it of great importance. And

There is likewise a very observable Difference in the Manner of Christ's speaking, *Who had received the Spirit without Measure*, and that in which the Apostles express themselves; whereas according to the common Opinion it ought to be the same. If the same Spirit had rendered them infallible, they had a right to declare to the World the Doctrines of Salvation with the same Power and Authority as Jesus Christ. But the contrary we find in their Writings. Christ spoke *as one having Authority*. *You have heard it was said of old, &c. But I say unto you, &c.* The Apostles, on the contrary, declare that they say nothing of themselves, and refer all to the Prophets, and to Jesus Christ: *Acts* xxvi. 22. *1 Cor.* xi. 23.

And what is yet of more Importance, is, that they distinguish very plainly that which they say of themselves, from that which Christ had said. *And unto the married I command,*

command, yet not I, but the Lord, &c. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord, &c. Says St. Paul 1 Cor. vii. 10, 12. which he would hardly have done, had he been aware that his Auditors had imagined his Words equally infallible with the Words of Christ.

These Proofs seem to me sufficiently convincing that the Apostles had not a constant Inspiration, which might give their Words an indisputable Authority. I do not deny but they had many immediate Inspirations, many Heavenly Visions; as appears by the *Acts*, by the *Revelations*, as well as other Places of Scripture; nay, I am so fully persuaded in this Matter, that I think him no good Christian who doubts of it. But the Question here is concerning an uniform, constant and ordinary Inspiration, as it is commonly explained in the Divinity-Schools.

It may be you will say, there are as many Arguments for this sort of Inspiration and as strong, as those brought by me to shew the contrary. The Apostles began their Letter, *Acts* xv. after this manner, *It has seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.* By which it appears, you will say, that they were filled with the Spirit of Infallibility, which dictated to them what they ought to say. I desire, first, that those who say so, reconcile this Supposition with the Dispute

that was among the Apostles, before they came to this Conclusion. In the second place: It is not likely, that if the Holy Ghost had possessed them in such a manner, that they had been only simple Instruments whereby He expressed his Will, they should have placed themselves in equal Rank with Him; they would have said simply, It has appeared good to the Holy Ghost, who speaks by us. What Prophet ever said, it seemed good to God and to me? In the third place: Suppose here, as the Critics say, a Figure by which one and the same thing is expressed by two Words; and that this manner of speaking amounts to no more than this, *It has seemed good to us who are full of the Holy Ghost*: The perpetual Inspiration contended for, cannot be hence concluded. The Apostles and all the Church of *Jerusalem* were animated by the Spirit of the Gospel, without being continually full of the Spirit of Prophecy. If it were otherwise, we must be forced to conclude that the whole Church of *Jerusalem*, not only the Apostles, but Elders of the Church, and all those that were assembled, were perpetually accompanied with a Spirit of Infallibility; which no body ever yet said, nor is it at all likely. In the fourth place: The Conclusion of the Letter is too weak for the Conclusion of a positive Law. FROM
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WHICH YOU SHALL DO WELL TO KEEP YOURSELVES. A Prophet under the Old Testament would have said, *From which keep your selves*; for so saith the Lord, whose Commandments you cannot slight without your own Destruction, &c.

Some may also here object the Spirit of *Miracles* and *Tongues*, which the Apostles received the Day of *Pentecost*. But the Effusion of that miraculous Spirit did not necessarily render all those that received it infallible in Doctrine: Otherwise all the Christians of that Time had been infallible. The Church of *Corinth* had received the Holy Ghost, as appears by the Epistles directed to it by *St. Paul*; and so should not have needed that Apostle's Instructions, because it had a great Number of infallible Persons within itself: But it appears, on the contrary, that it needed his Instructions, not only to correct its Vices, but also to resolve its Doubts, and even to rectify its Errors.

Thus then the Spirit of Miracles not being accompanied with Infallibility, it cannot be concluded, because the Apostles received that Spirit the Day of *Pentecost*, that they became as Gods; and were out of all danger of ever falling into the least Error. But what signify then these Words; *When the Spirit of Truth shall come, he will lead you in-*
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to all Truth? This Spirit of Truth is it not the miraculous Spirit which the Apostles received?

I have already observed that these Words cannot be understood rigorously, as if the Apostles had known all Sciences. I must add further, that there is something extremely figurative in them; as appears by the following Words; *For he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that he shall speak; and he shall shew you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I that he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you.* What Opinion soever a Man may entertain concerning the Holy Spirit, it is plain that these Words cannot be taken properly, as if the Holy Spirit had heard from God, or Jesus Christ, that with which he ought to inspire the Apostles.

The most simple Sense, and most conformable to the Accomplishment of this Promise, which can be given to these Words, is, to my thinking this. *I should explain many things to you more clearly than I have done, but you are not yet in Condition to receive them as you should. When you shall have received the Spirit of Miracles, he will teach you the rest that you ought to know; either by Visions, or by making you call to Mind that which*

I have told you ; so that he will make you understand the Sense, and will teach you what you ought to do afterwards. To speak properly, he will tell you nothing new ; he will but recal into your Memory, to make you better understand it, the Doctrine of my Father ; which is the same that I have taught you ; and which I may also call my Doctrine, because my Father has charged me to preach it, as the only Doctor of his Church.

The Holy Spirit led the Apostles into all Truths ; and took that which was Christ's, without ever speaking of himself ; making them call to mind all that they had forgotten ; and making them understand on many Occasions, even by extraordinary Revelations, that which Christ had said to them, and which they then understood not. This is plainly that which Christ teaches us in these Words ; These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you ALL THINGS, AND BRING ALL THINGS TO YOUR REMEMBRANCE, WHATSOEVER I HAVE SAID UNTO YOU, John xiv. 25. These last Words apparently explain the foregoing, He shall teach you all Things.

In effect, there is nothing in the Doctrine of the Apostles, which Christ had not told them ;

them; and in leaving them, he gave them no other Order for the preaching of the Gospel, but *to teach all People to observe all those Things which he had commanded them.* And the Apostles often observe, that it was not till after they had received the Holy Spirit, that they remembred, and understood many things which Christ had told them when he was here below. *These things understood not the Disciples at the first,* says St. John xii. 16. *but when Jesus was entered into his Glory, then remembered they that these things were written of him.* See the same Evangelist, ii. 22. and Acts xi. 16.

This is, in my Opinion, the Sense of Christ's Words; at least I find nothing among the Interpreters, that answers so well to the Event; which thoroughly convinces me that Christ must have meant some such thing. For when all is done, whatever may be said, the Promise ought to be understood by its correspondency with the Accomplishment, and there is no better Interpreter of Prophecies than their Execution.

This being the case, the Infallibility of the Apostles, according to my Judgment, consisted in this. They knew clearly the general Principles of the *Jewish* Religion, which had been taught them from their Cradle; they had heard Christ often tell what the Gospel added to Judaism; or if
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you will, Christ had explained to them more clearly the Will of God, and had shown them the Errors of the *Pharisees*; He had instructed them concerning the *Messiah*, and had made appear to them by many Proofs, that himself was *HE*; God had raised him from the Dead, and they had conversed with him after his Resurrection; and in the last place, they had seen him ascend into Heaven, from whence he assured them he would come one Day to judge the Quick and the Dead. They preached faithfully what they had heard, what they had seen with their Eyes, what they had observed with Attention, and what they had touched with their Hands. And all this they could declare and preach without any Mistake. For the Doctrine of Jesus Christ was comprised in a few Articles, sufficiently plain to be understood, and consequently easy to be remembered. Thus they related infallibly what they had seen and heard; and therein it is that their Infallibility consisted. The Spirit of Miracles which Christ sent them, might also strengthen their Memories, and open their Minds in a way we comprehend not. But it is certain, as has been made appear, that this Spirit directed them not in so miraculous a Manner, as to make it necessary for us to regard all they said or writ with the same Veneration

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as the Words of Jesus Christ, the only Master, the only infallible Doctor that ever was amongst Men; the only mystical Ark, in which *the Godhead dwelt bodily*, from whence proceeded nothing but Oracles.

It may be asked, Was there not a possibility that the Apostles might abandon the Truth of the Gospel, and preach a false Doctrine; and if it might be so, how we can be assured that they were not Deceivers? It must be owned, that though it was very unlikely, after having received so many Illuminations and Graces, they should fall into Apostacy; yet was it not absolutely impossible. But in that case God would never have approved by Miracles the Doctrine they taught; and thereby it is that we may be certain they were no Seducers. During their Time, many false Prophets crept in among the Christians; but they were soon discovered, because they could not confirm by Miracles, a Doctrine contrary to that of the Apostles, which was established by an infinity of Wonders. By those Prodigies it appeared, that the Apostles declared nothing but what was conformable to the Will of God, nor any thing that could be hurtful to Piety; for it is impossible God should favour a Doctrine which would turn Men from Holiness; nor must not believe, as observed already, that because God wrought Miracles

Miracles in favour of any Person, it therefore follows, that all Things pronounced by that Person, were directly from Inspiration, and ought to be received as the infallible Decisions of one that never errs. Provided that Person maintained the Substance of the Gospel, and said nothing but what conduced to Piety, God would not cease to bear Witness to his Doctrine, although all his Reasonings were not Demonstrations. God desired not that this Mark of his Approbation should be interpreted, as if he had thereby declared that all the Words of those that had miraculous Gifts, were to be received as Oracles. The first Epistle to the *Corinthians* will fully convince us in this.

That there is mention made in this Epistle of some miraculous Gifts, which seem to have been pure Inspirations; and which ought to make the Speakers attended unto, as if they were the simple Interpreters of the Holy Spirit. I readily acknowledge *the Spirit*, says St. Paul, 1 Cor. vii. 8. *gives to one the Word of Wisdom, to another the Word of Knowledge*. It seems as if he meant thereby the Gift of prophecy; that is to say, of instructing others in Piety; of which he says many things in the xivth Chapter of the same Epistle. This seems contrary to what I have been saying concerning the Inspiration of the Apostles, and I confess I cannot see how, according to my Notion,

this Difficulty can be clearly solved. I might say that this Gift of Prophecy was perhaps no other than a Disposition of Mind, which God sometimes bestowed on those who were to become Instructors; although he inspired them not extraordinarily with that which they were to say; which is the more likely, as this Gift was preserved and increased by Study and Reading; as appears by those Words of St. *Paul* to *Timothy*. First Epistle Chap. iv. 13, &c, *Until I come, give thy self to Reading, to Exhortation, to Instruction: Neglect not the Grace which is in thee, which was given thee by Prophecy, through the Imposition of the Presbytery: Meditate on these things, be always employed, to the end thy Improvement may be known of all Men*. Now it is plain that the Gifts which are owing to an actual and immediate Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, such as curing Diseases, &c. could not be increased by Application of Mind, as not depending upon Man in any sort. The most assiduous Study cannot contribute any thing to prophetick, or immediate Revelations.

This Conjecture seems probable enough. And indeed I see no other way of explaining what St. *Paul* says to *Timothy*. But without determining any thing concerning the Gift of Prophecy, it appears plainly by what St. *Paul* says, 1 Cor. xiv. that it consisted

sisted not in an immediate Revelation of the Holy Spirit, that forced the Prophets to speak. He there gives them this Advice; *Let the Prophets speak two or three, and let another judge; but if any thing be revealed to one of those that sits by, let the first hold his Peace; for ye may all Prophecy one by one, to the End, that all may learn, and all may be comforted: And the Spirits of the Prophets are subject to the Prophets.* The Prophets whom the Holy Spirit had inspired immediately with what they ought to say, had no need of this Advice. Nay it had been ridiculous: For the Holy Spirit inspiring them with what they had to say, would have inspired them likewise as to the Occasion and the Place, and would not have put many Persons on speaking at one Time in the same Place, nor so as to interrupt others who spake by his Inspiration. Moreover St. Paul would have *the Prophets judge one another, and that the Spirits of the Prophets be subject to the Prophets*; which cannot be understood of Prophets immediately inspired, who are subject to none but God, and who are to give Account to none but him. The Prophets of the Old Testament spoke as long as God inspired them; after which they held their Peace, without needing any Advertisement; because they easily perceived when the Inspiration ceased.

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We may now conclude ; I believe that no one but our Saviour, had a constant and perpetual Inspiration, and all whose Words we ought to receive as Oracles. As he was the only one amongst Men incapable of sinning, he alone it was whom God indowed with absolute Infallibility. The same Light perpetually enlightening his Mind, regulated the Motions of his Affections ; otherwise how can we conceive him not subject to Error, had he been subject to Sin. So great a Correspondence is there between the Mind and the Affections, that it is hardly possible any Irregularity should be in the one, without a Disorder in the other.

But to convince you, I am not the first Author of this Opinion, or that a desire of appearing singular, or an Affectation of Novelty has engaged me in this Notion ; I must inform you, that some great Men have been of the same Mind before me. St. *Jerome* makes this Observation upon the fifth Chapter of the Prophet *Micah*, in speaking of this Passage ; *And thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, &c.* which St. *Matthew* cites otherwise than it is either in the *Hebrew* or *Septuagint* ; Some, says he, affirm there is the like Error in almost all the Testimonies taken out of the *Old Testament* ; that either the Order is changed, or the Words, and that sometimes the Sense it self

self differs; the Apostles or Evangelists not transcribing the Testimonies out of the Book, but trusting to their Memory which sometimes failed them. It is true, St. Jerome says not that he approves this Opinion, but he makes it appear elsewhere, that he is not very far from it. In his Letter to Pammachius (*de optimo genere interpretandi*) of the best way of interpreting; he gathers together many Examples of the New Testament, by which he shews that the Apostles tie themselves more to the Sense than to the Words; and maintains, with good Reason, that we should not play the Criticks on them for it, nor even for the Places where they have mistaken Names. After having compared the Quotation, *Matthew xxvii. 9.* with the Original, he adds; *One may accuse the Apostle of Falsity in that he agrees neither with the Hebrew nor with the Septuagint; and which is more, that he is mistaken in the Name, putting Jeremy for Zachary.* He seems indeed elsewhere to disapprove that Opinion; but it is not unusual with him to accommodate himself to the received Opinion, and yet not omit to give his own; without any concern whether he contradicted himself or no. When he speaks as others do, you are not to conclude that he is of the same Opinion, because he may happen to speak so by way of Condescension; whereas when he says
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the contrary, it seems rather that he speaks his own Thoughts. You need only read what he says of the Dissimulation which he attributes to St. *Peter* and St. *Paul* (in his Commentary upon the second Chapter of the Epistle to the *Galatians*, and in his Answer to St. *Austin*) to be convinced that he believed St. *Paul* by a Prudence purely human (which he calls a *Dispensation*) pretended to believe that St. *Peter* was in the wrong; insomuch that when St. *Paul* says that St. *Peter* was to be reprov'd, because he walked not uprightly according to the Truth of the Gospel; it was not that he believed so, but only to hinder the converted *Gentiles* from imitating that Apostle. I say not that St. *Jerome* was here in the right; but at least it hereby appears, that he believed not that the Apostles were moved by a perpetual Inspiration to write what they did. We may join with St. *Jerome*, *Origen* (from whom he had this Opinion concerning the Dispensation that he attributes to these two Apostles) and divers *Greek Fathers*, who also followed *Origen*; as St. *Jerome* writing to St. *Austin* observes, in the Apology he makes for this Part of his Commentary.

Thus you see that the most able Interpreters of Scripture, Christian Antiquity has furnished us with, have been of the same Opinion with me. I may also say, that the most learn-
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ed Criticks of these last Ages have believed the same thing, since *Erasmus* and *Grotius* have publickly maintained it; those two great Men, who are beyond dispute in the first Rank amongst the Moderns that have concerned themselves in writing on the Bible, (—*Quorum se pectore tota Vetustas Condidit, & major collectis viribus exit.*)

Erasmus upon the second Chapter of *St. Matthew* says thus, *St. Jerome* abhors the Imputation of Falshood to the Apostles, not that of slips of Memory. Nor is the Authority of the Scripture therefore questionable, because they differ in Words or Sense, as long as the Main of the Matter treated of, and that whereon our Salvation depends, is clear. For as the divine Spirit, which governed the Minds of the Apostles, suffered them to be ignorant of some things, to make Mistakes, and to err (either in Judgment or Affection) without any Damage to the Gospel; nay it improves that failing to the help of our Faith; so it is not unlikely that it so influenced the Faculty of their Memory, that though something after the Manner of Men might escape them, yet they should not only derogate from the Credit of the Holy Scripture, but might even gain Credit to it, with those who otherwise might be apt to slander it as written by Confederacy. Of this sort is that of putting one Name for another, which *Jerome* confesses to be somewhere done; or of relating

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things out of Order, &c. Christ only is stiled the Truth, He alone was free from all Error. He says also upon Acts x. Neither do I think it necessary to attribute every thing that was in the Apostles to a Miracle. They were Men, some things they were ignorant of, in some they were mistaken. He maintains likewise the same Opinion at large in his Epistle, (Lib. 2. Ep. 6.) against Eckius, who had blamed him in a Letter he had written to him; and he thus concludes all that Matter; Christ suffered his own to err, even after they had received the Comforter; but without danger of apostatizing from the Fundamentals of the Christian Faith; even as at this Day we confess the Church may err without that Danger. And to conclude; how do you know, whether Christ would not that this complete Praise should be kept only for himself, who stiles himself alone, the Truth? As he alone was without Spot or Blemish of Sin, according to the Opinion of the Ancients, so perhaps he only was beyond all Exception true.

Nothing could be said more fully upon this Subject. And Grotius, though he speaks not so plain, is not wanting to explain himself sufficiently; giving us to understand, that every thing the Apostles said was not, in his Opinion, immediately inspired. Paul, says he, in his Appendix to his Commentary concerning Anti-Christ,

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in two places, 1 *Thess.* iv. 14. and 2 *Cor.* xv. 22. speaking of the Resurrection, divides those that are to rise again into two kinds; those who are already dead, and those who shall be alive at that time: But of this last Number he makes himself one, using this Pronoun *We*: And in that to the Corinthians, *We* that shall be alive; as much as to say, he made account that the Resurrection would happen within the time of his Life; speaking herein not dogmatically, but conjecturally; as he does also concerning his Journey into Spain, *Rom.* xv. 28. and frequently in other Places. As not the Prophets, so neither had the Apostles constant Revelations in all things: And the things in which they had not received Revelation, of those they speak conjecturally as other Men. We have Examples thereof, 1 *Sam.* xvi. 6. 2 *Sam.* vii. 3.

The ablest Divine among the *Arminians* was also of this Opinion *.
 But to ease you of seeking it, *Theol. lib. 4.*
 if you are not at Leisure, or Sect. 1. §. 4. p.
 want convenience, I will ^{232.}
 transcribe some of the Words: It is not absurd to grant (says he) that the Holy Spirit may have left the Writers of the sacred Books to the common Condition of Mankind, and to their own Frailty, in relating those things that belonged to the Circumstance of a Fact, for which a due Knowledge and Memory was sufficient; even altho' that was subject to failing:

He says also a little lower; *It is better, and would perhaps cause less Scandal, to acknowledge freely and willingly a light failing of Memory (that so we may not seem to favour things wrested and absurd) rather than to make use of absurd Interpretations in excuse of lighter failings. Otherwise the Suspicion of a failing is not only not avoided, but it is increased; and because the Fault is not acknowledged, it seems as if Truth were not in good earnest sought by us, but that Obstinacy were for some Reason or other made Use of; which ought to be looked upon as the greatest Reproach imaginable to Professors of the Christian Religion.* He shows afterwards, That it follows not, because the Apostles might be deceived in things of small Importance, that therefore they could fall into any considerable Error for want of Memory: And the chief Reason he gives is, That the fundamental Doctrines depend not on a Circumstance, which they could forget; nor have they any thing in them obscure, or hard to be retained; *Which is so true, says he, that I make no Difficulty to affirm, That if any one says there is a Sense in the Scripture necessary to Salvation, which appears at first contrary to Reason, we ought thereby to judge he attributes to the Scripture a Sense it had not. And this is what I believe, and am convinced of by reading the sacred Books.*

I confess that the greatest Part of Divines are now-a-days of a different Opinion. But as I desire not to oblige any one to approve my Judgment by the Authority of those I have quoted, so neither do I hold my self obliged to submit to the Authority of a crowd of learned Men, who only say the same thing one after the other, without ever examining or bringing Reasons for it.

Two things however are observable here of very great Importance, which are not commonly reflected on: The first is, That in one Controversy which we have with the *Roman Church*, our Divines all agree, that we ought not to have so much regard to Words as Things; for, upon Supposition that in the apocryphal Books there is nothing contrary to Piety, they say that the Controversy about them is not considerable. Now if there be no danger in believing Expressions to be divine that have nothing in them but human, when the Doctrines therein contained are not contrary to the revealed Truth; What danger can there be in believing that any Truths which we acknowledge to be Divine, are expressed in Terms not divinely inspired? The same Reason that makes us believe there is no danger in the one, persuades us also there is none in the other. It is because we are not saved by the Words, but by the Things.

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The other Observation is, That we receive among the Canonical Books of the New Testament, Writings whose Authors are not well known; which we could not do, if we thought it necessary, in receiving a Book as Canonical, to be assured that every Word was inspired; since to be assured thereof we ought to have evident Proof that a Man inspired by God was the Author of that Book: For instance, it is not known who writ the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, whether it were an Apostle, or some Disciple of the Apostles; so that we cannot determine whether the Words of that Epistle were inspired or not. Nevertheless it is received; because it was certainly written in the Apostles Time, and contains nothing but what is entirely conformable to their Doctrine. Thus it is commonly esteemed of little Importance, whether the Words are divinely inspired or no, provided the Things expressed be true. And thus we see, that in truth Divines are generally very favourable to the Opinion here maintained, without being aware of it, at the same Time.

It is unnecessary to insist much in proving that God has not always dictated to the Apostles the very Words that they used, when it is evident he did not always dictate to them the Things. Not that I make

any doubt but he has often revealed to them the Things, and even inspired them with the very Words, as in the Prophecies where there was need to remember divers Names, and when they spoke strange Languages. Tho' it may nevertheless be supposed, that (as to what concerns the Gift of Tongues) God disposed at once the Brains of them that received it, in such a manner that they could without trouble join certain Sounds to certain Ideas; just as they would have done had they been used to it from their Infancy; and that afterwards they were left at Liberty to make use of those new Languages just as they should think fit. And thus those that learned by Inspiration the Languages of the *Medes*; for Example, had their Brains disposed in the same manner as they would have had if they had learned that Language from their Infancy, and could make use of it as easily as their Mother-Tongue. At least it is evident that some who had received this miraculous Gift did sometimes abuse it; which they would not have done, if they never had spoken those Languages but by present immediate Inspiration. See 1 *Cor.* xiv.

But without determining that Point, I am of Opinion with *Erasmus*, that the Apostles never learned the Greek they used by Inspiration; because they would certainly have

have spoke it like the Native *Græcians*; whereas they mixed with it a world of Hebraisms, as the *French* that speak Latin do Gallicisms. See *Erasmus* upon *Acts* x.

Not that I believe, neither, that they had learned the Greek Language by the Commerce they had with the *Greeks* during the Functions of their Charge, as *Erasmus* thought probable: It is more likely they they had learned it from their Infancy. For *St. Paul* who was born in *Cilicia*, where they spoke nothing but *Greek*, undoubtedly had learned it young; but he corrupted it afterwards by his long dwelling in *Judea*; where besides the *Greek* they spake a broken *Chaldee*, whose Dialect mixing with the *Greek* rendered it obscure and difficult, such as is the Stile of that Apostle.

The others that were born in *Judea* had learned it also from their Infancy, as it was commonly there spoken; that is to say, extremely corrupted by the ancient Language of the Country, which was still spoken there, as appears by divers Places of the New Testament. This *Erasmus* has observed in the Places already cited: *When I excuse the Apostles*, says he in his Letter to *Eckius*, *who learned their Greek not from the Orations of Demosthenes, but from the Discourse of the common People, I deny not their Gift of Tongues; nor does it thence follow that*
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they might not learn Greek by common Converse. Affuredly they learned the Syriac by common Converse, and why not the Greek? For (by means of Alexander the Great, and the Roman Empire) Ægypt, and the greater part of Syria, and all the lesser Asia, nay almost all the East, as Jerome says, spoke Greek. And I can never think that the Holy Spirit made them forget what they had formerly learned. The Greek Language then was spoken in Judea, together with the antient Language which the Jews brought from Babylon, that is to say, the Chaldean; but corrupted in process of Time, as the French and Flemish are spoke together now-a-days in Flanders. And as the French they now speak in Flanders is full of the Flemish Dialect, and of Terms unknown in France, so the Greek of Judea was heretofore full of Chaldaisms, and of barbarous ways of speaking, which undoubtedly must offend the Ears of the Grecians.

The History of the *Acts* of the Apostles, that informs us in several Places, that *Hebrew* or *Chaldean* was spoken in *Judea*, tells us also that they made Use of another Language, which could be no other than *Greek*. St. *Luke* observes, *Acts* xxii. that St. *Paul* haranguing the *Jews*, began to speak to them in *Hebrew*, and that *when they heard that he spake to them in the Hebrew Tongue, they kept the more*

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Silence; by which we understand that he might have spoke to the People in another Language; for otherwise there had been no ground for the Observation that they listned more attentively, when they perceived he spake *Hebrew*; since that in speaking any other Language except *Hebrew*, they could not have understood him. It appears then that *Greek* was the Language spoke in *Judea*, and it is likely *Pilate* spoke *Greek* to our Lord, and that our Lord answered him in the same. The People only preferred the Language of the Country to the *Greek* which was less antient, and which they had never learned but by Force, by means of the Kings of *Syria* that tyrannized over them; and so spoke it very incorrectly.

It is true, some of the *Jews* spoke the *Greek* in it's Purity; but they were such as were born in Countries where only *Greek* was spoken, as *Philo*; or they had acquired a Habit of speaking good *Greek* by reading or studying, as *Josephus*. So at this Day there are *Walloons* that speak *French* very well, (altho' the generality of that People speak it extremely ill) because they have taken much pains to correct in themselves the Faults committed by others, either by applying themselves to reading, or by travelling in *France*. These *Jews* born in the

the Countries where the *Greek* Tongue only was used, understood neither the antient Hebrew, nor the Hebrew spoken at that Time in *Judea*. They used in their Synagogues the *Septuagint* Version, and because they spoke nothing but *Greek*, they were called the *Hellenist Jews*. *Salmasius*, in his Book of the *Hellenist Tongue*, against *Heinsius*, shows that these *Jews* spoke very good *Greek*; and that it is very absurd in some learned Men to imagine there was an *Hellenist Tongue*; as if the *Hebrews* that knew not their own Language, had a particular one different from that of the Places where they dwelt; and that this Language was that of the *Septuagint* and of the New Testament. If a Name were to be given to this corrupted *Greek*, it should rather be called *Hebraistic*; since it is full of *Hebraisms*, or *Chaldaisms*. But as the Language of the *Walloons*, or of some of the Provinces of *France*, cannot pass for a particular Language, being no more than a corrupted *French*, so neither ought the barbarous *Greek* of *Judea* to pass for a Language by it self, different from the *Greek* Language.

What wonder is it then that the Apostles should in their Writings use the *Greek* Tongue improperly? when they had either lived a good part of their Lives in *Judea*, or were born there, without ever applying

themselves to learn it in any Perfection, or to speak it in Purity. St. *Paul* himself, who was born in a Town that spoke nothing but *Greek*, had so corrupted his Speech by living in *Judea*, that he confesses, *he was ignorant in the Language*, 2 Cor. xi. 6. as sufficiently appears by all his Epistles, the *Greek* whereof is very different from that of *Josephus*. And therefore the Greek Fathers have complained of the Obscurity of his Stile, of the Barbarisms therein, and of apparent Confusion in the order of his Discourses; and those who very readily understood *Plato* and *Demosthenes*, were obliged, as *Erasmus* judiciously observes, to take great pains to understand St. *Paul*. We need only to compare his Stile with that of any *Greek* Author, to convince us, that this Apostle applied himself not much to the *Greek* Eloquence.

We see then the Holy Spirit inspired not the Apostles with the Expressions they were to use; if so, St. *Paul* could not have said, *he was ignorant in the Language*. He should have said, that the Holy Spirit inspired him with a Language such as was that of the People. And all the *Greek* Fathers would have blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, when they observed the little Eloquence of St. *Paul*; for according to this Supposition, that would not have proceeded from St. *Paul*,

Paul, but from the Holy Spirit. Any one who doubts of this, may read *Erasmus*, in the places cited. A famous Protestant Divine has undertaken indeed to confute him, in his Annotations upon the 10th of the *Acts*; but he only declames as he is used to do, against an Author more learned and more judicious than himself, without bringing any solid Reason.

We must now just mention some Books of the Old Testament, that contain neither History nor Prophecy; such are the Books of *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, the Song of *Solomon*, and *Job*; which last is doubtless a Dramatic Piece, whereof nothing is true but the Subject; as are the Tragedies of the Greek Poets.

There is no Proof that any thing contained in the *Proverbs* was inspired by God, in a prophetic manner. They are moral Sentences, which a good Man might very well pronounce, without Inspiration; as are those contained in *Ecclesiasticus*. Many of them are no more than vulgar Proverbs, which carry indeed a good Sense, but have nothing in them of Divine. There are a great many Directions about Oeconomy, which Women and Country People everywhere know without Revelation; as in Chap. xxiv. 27. and xxvii. 23. and the Description of a vertuous Woman at the latter end

end of the Book. The Name of Prophet is very liberally bestowed on *Agur* the Son of *Jakeb*, for some Moralities that are found under his Name: *Prov.* xxx. Whereas I dare be bold to say, better things might have been said without the Spirit of Prophecy: *Three things*, says he, for Example, *are too wonderful for me, yea four which I know not; The way of an Eagle in the Air, The way of a Serpent upon a Rock, The way of a Ship in the midst of the Sea, and The way of a Man with a Maid.* To believe the Spirit of Prophecy, dictated such things as these, is at least to have a very low Opinion of it: Nor does the Author pretend to any such Eminency; but confesses modestly of himself, *That he is more brutish than any Man, and has not the Understanding of a Man.*

But there is particularly one prudential Precept often repeated, which the Merchants of our Days know, as well as the *Israelites* of *Solomon's*. It is that which expressly forbids them to be Surety for any body, *Chap.* vi. i. xvii. 18. xx. 16. xxii. 26. xxvii. 13. It is true by the Rules of good Husbandry a Man should never be Surety, but there happens oftentimes Cases wherein Charity ought to be preferred before good Husbandry; as appears by the Parable of the *Samaritan*, who became Surety for the Ex-
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pence of the Jew, that was hurt on the Road. There is, methinks, no great need that God should send Prophets to teach Men good Husbandry; our Saviour on the contrary found it very necessary to preach Liberty.

Some learned Men have been of Opinion, that the Book of *Ecclesiastes* is a Dialogue; wherein a pious Man disputes with an impious one, who is of the Opinion of the *Sadducees*. And in effect there are things so directly opposite one to another, that the same Person cannot be supposed to speak. The *Epicurean* Conclusion (*To eat, drink and be merry, because a Man has nothing else*) which is found in many places of this Book, is altogether contrary to the Conclusion at the end; *Fear God, and keep his Commandments, &c.* But it is extremely difficult to distinguish the Persons, or to find out exactly in the Name of what Person the Author speaks in every Passage. However it be, there appears in it nothing of prophetic; and there is little likelihood that the Spirit of God would set out, with so great Strength, the Arguments of *Sadducees*, or perhaps of worse Men, to answer them but in two or three Words. Read the beginning of the ninth Chapter, and reflect on these Words: *The living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any*
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more a Reward; for the Memory of them is forgotten. Also their Love and their Hatred, and their Envy is now perished; neither have they any more a Portion for ever, in any thing that is done under the Sun. Go thy way, eat thy Bread with Joy, and drink thy Wine with a merry Heart; for God now accepteth thy Works.

Grotius imagines this Book to be writ not by *Solomon* himself, but under his Name, by one that had been in *Chaldea*; since there are many *Chaldean* Words found in it. If this Conjecture be right, as is not impossible, then this Book will be nothing but a Piece of Wit and Fancy, composed by some of those that had been in the Captivity. And I know one who has studied much the Criticks of the Holy Scripture, who suspects the Author of this Book to have been in the Opinion of the *Sadducees* about the Immortality of the Soul and the World to come. It seems to him that this Author says nothing which a *Sadducee* might not say; but for my own part, I think it not expedient to determine any thing about it.

It is the common Opinion that the Song of *Solomon* is a mysterious Book, describing the mutual Love between Christ and his Church; but there is no Proof of it in the Old or New Testament, nor in the Book it self. All that can be said is, that the
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Jews explain this Book allegorically of God, of *Moses*, and of the *Jewish Church*. But a Man need only read their Allegories, to see that they are the Visions of *Rabbins* without any Foundation, except in the fanciful Extravagance of their Brains; which Frame of Mind our Divines have so much inherited from them, that they give themselves wholly up to find Mysteries in every thing. Nay it must be confessed that some of them have in that out done the *Rabbins*; and that there is nothing so Chimerical in the *Chaldee Paraphrast*, as in the Commentaries of those who pretend this Book ought to be explained by *Revelation*; and that in it are to be found all the Wars about Religion of this past Age, in *Germany*, the *Interim*, the League of *Smalcald*, the Peace of *Passau*, &c.

There being then no Proof of the Mysteries that are pretended to be in this Book; if we judge by the Book it self, we shall find it to be an Idyle, or Eglogue, where *Solomon* brings himself in as a Shepherd, and one of his Wives (perhaps *Pharaoh's* Daughter, as the learned think) as a Shepherdess; that the Stile is the same with that of the Pastoral Poems of the *Greeks* and *Latins*, excepting that it is more rough and dithyrambic, according to the Genius of the *Hebrew Poetry*. You may compare

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the Similitudes *Solomon* makes use of in the fourth Chapter with those *Ovid* uses in the Pastoral Song he makes *Polyphemus* sing, in the xiiiith Book of his *Metamorphosis*.

The Book of *Job* is also a piece that has nothing in it of prophetic. The Critics, who have any thing of a nice Judgment, agree that it is a sort of Tragi-Comedy. That there was such a Person as *Job* is very likely (since the Prophet *Ezekiel* speaks of him) and that he met with great Afflictions, which afforded Subject to some *Jew* of the Captivity to exercise his Wit upon. In this Book, as well as in *Ecclesiastes*, the many *Chaldean* Words, show that it was composed either in *Chaldea*, or after the return from the Captivity. Divines agree that God inspired not *Job's* Friends with what the Author makes them say; and this Book being written in Verse, seems to be a Work of Meditation, wherein the Author would make his Parts appear. Neither *Job*, nor his Friends could talk in that manner *extempore*. The Design of the Work is to show, that Providencce often afflicts good People, not to punish them for any particular Sin, as if they had deserved those Afflictions more than others, but simply to try them, and give them Occasion to exercise their Virtue. This is without doubt a Truth, but there is no need of being a Prophet to know

know it. And on the other side there is one very remarkable Fault in this Book. The Author brings in *Job* complaining Chap. iii. with Bitterness and extreme Impatience; unworthy, not only of a pious Man, who had the Knowledge of the true God, but even of a Pagan that had any Wisdom. *Let the Day perish in which I was born, and the Night wherein it was said, a Man-Child is born, &c.* This manner of cursing the Day of his Birth with so much Passion, becomes not a pious Man, such as *Job*, to what Extremity soever he might be reduced: It is to be guilty of great *Indecorum*, to put into a good Man's Mouth such passionate Words; as well as those that are in Chap. x. *I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me. Becomes it thee to oppress? &c.* After such Expressions as these, which are very like Blasphemies, God finds, says the Author, *that his Servant Job has spoke the thing that is right before him*, and is angry with his Friends for believing that *Job* was afflicted for his Sins.

Hereby I think it clearly appears, that there was no more Inspiration in this Book, than in the three foregoing. Not but that these Books are useful, and may be read with Profit and Edification, as well as Antiquity read those which we at present call

Apocrypha. Nay it may be allowed that they which composed them had the Spirit of God; that is to say, were full of Piety; and that they writ them with a Prospect of leading those that should read them into the ways of Piety.

But it may be objected, that these Books being in the *Jews* Canon, ought to be acknowledged for divinely inspired, rather than the *Apocrypha* that never were in it: I answer to that; First, That no clear Reason is brought to convince us, that those who made the Canon, or Catalogue of their Books, were infallible, or had any Inspiration, whereby to distinguish inspired Books from those which were not. This Collection is commonly attributed to *Esdra*s and the great *Sanhedrim* of his Time, amongst whom they say were *Zacchary*, *Haggai*, and *Malachy*. But many learned Men believe not this Story, because no Proof is brought for it, except a very uncertain *Jewish* Tradition. There is much more likelihood that this Collection which we have is the Remainder of the antient Books of the *Jews*, which divers particular Men at first gathered together, and of which afterwards public Use was made in the Synagogues; whereas in the Time of *Nehemiah* (as appears by the Book that bears his Name) they read publicly only the Book of the Law.

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In the second place, if you will stand to the *Jews* Canon, it is plainly on my side. They divide the Scripture into three Parts; of which the first contains the Books of the Law; the second the Books they call the Prophets; and the third contain others, which they call *Cbetoubim*, or simply *Writings*; that is to say, the *Psalms*, the *Proverbs*, *Job*, *Daniel*, *Esdras*, *Nebemiah*, the *Chronicles*, and those which they call the five little Books, the Song of *Solomon*, *Ruth*, the *Lamentations*, *Ecclesiastes*, and *Esther*. They believed that these Books which they called *Cbetoubim* were not inspired as the other; and therefore they made them a separate Part of Scripture distinct from the two former which they believed to be inspired. This Division is very antient, having been in Use in the time of our Lord, *Luke* xxiv. 44. and *Josephus* owns it in his first Book against *Appion*; which makes me believe that this Opinion of the *Jews* is grounded upon the Judgment, that those who collected the Books of their Canon made of them. It is certain *Daniel* is truly a Prophet, as well as *Isaiah*; but it is likely they have ranked his Book among the *Cbetoubim*, only because it was brought out of *Chaldea* after the Collection was made; and perhaps because, being written in *Chaldean*, it was in Part translated into *Hebrew* by some others,

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as some of the learned have conjectured, For the other Writings which make up this Division of the Scripture, being but Histories, or Books of Morality, or Songs, they had Reason to determine that there was nothing of prophetic in them; at least not of the same kind of Prophecy with that of *Isaiab*, and others who are properly called Prophets. Some Predictions are indeed found in the Book of *Psalms*, but not of that sort which proceed from Inspiration or Revelation, as were those of *Isaiab*. *David* never says, *Thus saith the Lord*; nor is it said in his History that in his time he passed for a Prophet. It happened that in speaking of his own Person, he spoke Things that agreed not so much to himself as to the *Messiah*, of whom unknown to himself he was the Type. But this sort of Prophecy I have already treated of.

It may be alledged perhaps, that Christ has acknowledged for divinely inspired all the Books of the Old Testament, and for that Reason alone, all Christians are to be of that belief. But there is not one Passage in the Gospel, where Christ tells us that all the Books of the Old Testament were inspired by God, both as to the Words and Things: He approves them only in gross, without descending to particulars, and examining every Book by it self. It was sufficient

sufficient that there were divers Prophecies in the Old Testament, the Authority whereof was received among the *Jews*, that pointed at him. Our Saviour never undertook to make a critical Treatise upon the sacred Books, nor to clear the historical Differences in them. His design was not to make us able Critics, but good Men; that we might render to God the Obedience we owe him. He omitted nothing that might instruct us in our Duty, but he never troubled himself about correcting certain Errors of small Importance, which might be among the *Jews*.

And if we understand all the Words of Christ, when he speaks of the Scripture, in a strict Sense; as if every Syllable of the Books he cites, was acknowledged to be inspired, and the others on the contrary to be rejected out of the Number of the sacred Books; we must exclude many of those that are commonly reputed inspired. Neither he nor the Apostles ever cite the Works of *Solomon*, or the Book of *Job*; St. *James* indeed praises the Patience of *Job*, which, to speak properly, is not to cite the Book but the History. And if from hence we must conclude all these Books to have been wrongfully inserted in the *Jewish* Canon, the common Opinion would be found
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contrary to the Authority of Christ and of his Apostles.

These Books then that we have spoken of, are not necessarily to be accounted Divine, for being in the Canon, or Catalogue of the Books of the *Jews*; which Jesus Christ never called in question: Nor is there any Reason to interpret the Word Canonical as if it signified inspired of God. The *Jews* inserted in their Collection all the Fragments they had remaining of their antient Books; they left out none, because they had no others. It was their whole Library, the rest having been lost, either in, or before, or after the Captivity; for the Story mentions not the Time of that fatal Loss. At first they pretended not that this Collection consisted of no Books but what were divinely inspired; but in process of Time, as there were therein many Writings that were truly prophetic, and as these were the only Books that had escaped the general Loss which had involved the rest, they began to be looked on with more respect than they had been at first; and at length it came to be believed, that all these Books, that were in the antient Catalogue, were truly Divine. And whereas before that time, Men applied themselves to the Observation of what was most considerable in the Law, without making many Commentaries; from thence forwards

ward they grew nice about the Words; would take every thing in a strict Sense; and, by seeking for Mysteries where there were none, they abandoned the most essential Part of the *Jewish* Religion. They made the Knowledge of Religion to consist in the Study of a thousand vain Subtilties, and Piety to consist in the scrupulous Observation of Ceremonial Laws, just as the Doctors thought proper to interpret them. The *Pharisees* did this in the Time of our Lord, as the Christian Divines, both Antient and Modern, have endeavoured to imitate since the Death of the Apostles. In their Time, Men applied themselves to learn their Doctrine, without subtilizing about their Expressions; and this they did as they were assured those holy Men very faithfully taught what they had learned from Christ. Since then, the Practice is to dispute about their Words, and to strain to the utmost many of their Expressions, which were not very exact; from whence have proceeded Factions amongst Christians, who have fallen foul one upon another about the meaning of particular Expressions of the Apostles, they neglect at the same time to obey the Precepts of Jesus Christ; that is to say, they have forsaken the Substance of Religion, to busy themselves about the Outside. Men have thought

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it an Honour to be stiled zealously Orthodox, to be firmly linked to a certain Party, loading all others with Calumnies, and damning by an absolute Authority the rest of Mankind; without taking care to demonstrate the Sincerity and Fervour of their Piety, by an exact Observation of the Gospel Morals; which has come to pass by Reason that Orthodoxy agrees mighty well with our Passions, while the severe Morals of the Gospel are incompatible with our way of living.

Thus much only, to let you see that this great Zeal Men pretend for the Letter of Scripture, is little more than a Cloak made use of, to hide the small Esteem they have for the real Religion of Jesus Christ; which consists neither in Criticisms, nor Controversies, but in keeping the Commandments of God.

If it be asked, What Authority is allowed the Holy Scripture, and what Use is to be made of it according to these Principles? I answer, to begin with the New Testament, which is the Main Foundation of our Faith, in the first place, Jesus Christ, in whom were hidden all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge, and whom God has expressly commanded us *To hear*, was absolutely infallible. We are to believe without Hesitation whatever he says, because
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he says it, and because God has testified that he speaks nothing but Truth.

In the second place, since we have nothing writ by Christ himself, we are to believe what his Apostles have said concerning his Life and Doctrine; since God has given Testimony to them by the Miracles he enabled them to do; and since they themselves sealed the Truth of their Deposition with their own Blood. As they tell us only what they saw and heard, it was impossible for them to be deceived in the Substance of the History and Doctrine. It may happen that in a Circumstance of small Importance they relate things not so exactly as they happened, and agree therein not exactly together. But in the Historical Facts, whereon our Faith in Jesus Christ, is grounded; his being born of a Virgin, his Miracles, his Death, his Resurrection, and his Ascension into Heaven; they all agree, though some difference may be found among them in particular Circumstances, which is nothing to the Substance of the History. It is no ways necessary for the Foundation of our Faith, as I before observed, that they should agree exactly in every Circumstance to the least tittle; and of what Use is the trouble the learned have given themselves to reconcile these sort of Contradictions? It is better to own ingenuously that there *are* some, than to strain

the Sense of their Writings, to make them agree with one another; which instead of converting Libertines, excites only their Raillery, and confirms them in their Impiety. As to what concerns the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, not the least Contradiction appears among the Evangelists, although expressed in different Terms, and related on different Occasions. We must observe therefore that they confine themselves only to the Sense, and not exactly to the same Order in which Christ preached it; nor are we rigorously to insist upon their Expressions, as if they made Choice of some Words rather than others, that we may insinuate certain Niceties which are ordinarily attributed to them without the least Probability; nor should we lay such Stress upon the Order they make use of in their Writings, as to colour thereby Inferences, otherwise not in the least obvious in the Sense of our Saviour's Words. A Man of very small Observation will find that popular Expressions are every where made use of, without ever aiming at Elegancy, or speaking with that Exactness, Philosophers or Geometricians use in their Writings. Why should we then, as is commonly the case, insist so much upon the manner of their expressing Christ's Doctrine? Let us endeavour to understand the Genius of the Language they use, and
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to adhere to the substance of Essentials; which are expressed so frequently, and in such a Variety of Ways, that there is no Difficulty in framing to our selves an Idea thereof, sufficiently clear to instruct us perfectly in our Duty.

In the third place, as for the Epistles of the New Testament, they afford us not only the same Considerations with the last mentioned, in respect of their Stile, but two Things further are also to be observed, and distinguished. We find in them the same Doctrines as in the Evangelists, and which the Apostles often assure us they learned from Christ. But there are other things, which the Apostles speak from themselves, or which, by several Consequences, they fairly draw from the Old Testament. The first of these are to be believed on the same footing with the Gospels, from the Authority of Jesus Christ, who preached them to the *Jews*: The second are to be received, because they contain nothing either that is not quite conformable to the Doctrine of Christ, or that is not founded upon right Reason. The Apostles desire us not to believe them upon their own Word. They distinguish in that *their* Authority from the Authority of *Christ*, 1 Cor. vii, 10, 12, 25. But as they attended carefully to Doctrines of Edification, which are but few, and never in-
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gaged in Inquiries of too nice a Nature, they have said nothing that is not conformable to that Spirit of the Gospel, with which they were filled, and which right Reason will not readily admit. It is worth Observation, that not having an extraordinary Inspiration for writing their Epistles, divers things are inserted in them concerning their Designs, or particular Affairs, in which we are by no means to search for, or expect any thing of the mysterious Kind. For instance, the Salutations at the end of their Epistles; the Order St. *Paul* sends *Timothy* to take with him in his return *Mark*, to bring the Cloak he had left at *Troas* with *Carpus*, the Books, and especially the Parchments; the Advice he gives him to drink a little Wine for his Stomach's sake, and because of his Weaknesses; and other things of the same Nature. See St. *Jerome's* Preface to his Commentary upon the Epistle to *Philemon*.

Fourthly, there are in these Epistles, many Prophecies scattered up and down; and the *Apocalypse* is entirely prophetic. Now we are certainly to give Credit to these Revelations, since they were imparted immediately to the Apostles by God himself. And they are very easy to be distinguished from other things, which the Apostles give as their own Conjectures only; of which you have some Examples in the Words of *Grotius*,

tius, which have been cited concerning the Inspiration of the Writers of the New Testament.

And thus, according to my *Hypothesis*, I think the Authority of the Scripture must continue in full Force. I maintain, you see, that we are obliged to believe the Substance of the History of the New Testament; and all the Doctrines of Jesus Christ; all that the Apostles speak from Inspiration; and whatsoever they have said from themselves, so far as it is found conformable to our Saviour's Doctrine, and to right Reason. Nothing farther can be necessary to be believed, in order to our Salvation. And it seems too evident to me that those new Opinions, brought into the Christian Religion since the Death of the Apostles, which have been here refuted, being imaginary and ungrounded, instead of affording any Advantage to the Christian Religion, are certainly very prejudicial to it. An Inspiration is attributed to the Apostles to which they make not the least pretence, nor is there left the least Mark thereof in their Writings. And hereupon it fatally happens, that those who have strength enough of Understanding to deny the Assent to a thing for which there is no good Proof brought, though preached with never so much Gravity; it happens, I say, that these Persons reject the whole Christian Religion, because they distinguish not
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true Christianity from the Dreams of fanciful Divines.

After all this, it is easy to guess what we are to think of the Authority of the Books of the Old Testament. The Prophecies are certainly to be believed, because Christ has authorized them: The Substance of the History must also be believed for the same Reason; notwithstanding any Uncertainty in some inconsiderable Circumstances; and that there still is some Uncertainty, appears by the many Contradictions which Divines, with all their Subtilty, have not been able to reconcile, after puzzling above three thousand Years about it. The Doctrines too, in it ought to be received, so far as they conform to those of the Gospel; or, rather we may say that the true meaning of the Law must be learned from Christ. As for those Books that appear to be no more than pieces of Wit and Fancy, or wherein nothing but Human is to be perceived, such as the Song of *Solomon*, *Ecclesiastes*, &c. no Conclusion can with Justice be drawn. And lastly, we ought not to stretch the Sense of particular Expressions too far, as the *Jews* do: For a very few places excepted, the Expressions are the same with those the sacred Writers were wont to make use of in explaining their other Thoughts; that is to say, they have delivered both the *Jewish* History, and the Revelations they had from Heaven, after their

their own common manner of expressing themselves.

These, Sir, are the Thoughts of Mr. N— concerning the Inspiration of the sacred Pen-Men. I am informed that from these Principles he draws three Consequences: The first is, That by admitting this *Hypothesis*, the many great Disputes which have risen among Christians, from the false Subtilty of those Divines, who interpreting too mysteriously the Expressions of holy Scripture, as if every Syllable had been dictated by God, might hereby be put a stop to. The second is, That whereas by scrupulously adhering to the Letter of the Scripture, the Essence of Religion becomes neglected; as if God required of us no more than to believe the divine Inspiration of the holy Scripture; instead, I say, of this Practice, it will be found necessary entirely and sincerely to apply our selves to the obeying Christ's Precepts, which is the only thing God *indispensably* requires at our Hands. The third Consequence is, That hereby will at once be solved an infinite Number of Difficulties, which Libertines ever alledge against the holy Scripture, and which cannot possibly be solved by the ordinary Principles. The Tongues of such, says Mr. N— will be stopped, and no longer will it be of Service to them to object against Christians the Contradictions which may be found in the Scriptures;

tures; the Poverty of Style, and the little Order observed in many of the Discourses of the holy Writers, with whatsoever else they have thought proper to urge against our Divines, who in vain it must be allowed have puzzled themselves for Answers. To impose nothing upon these Men as necessary Articles of Belief, but the Truth of *what is most essential to the Old and New Testament, and the Divinity of the Doctrine of our Saviour*, in which nothing but what is conformable to right Reason will be found; they will at length be brought, says he, ingenuously to confess the Christian Religion really to be descended from Heaven; and what they have with such Obstinacy rejected, because built on Foundations repugnant to the great Light of Reason, they will be hereby persuaded to embrace.

To enter upon an Examination of the above Consequences, or the Principles from which they are drawn, is what I shall not pretend to undertake. You have here an exact Account of Mr. N—'s Thoughts upon the Subject, which is all I promised you; and I sincerely wish that some judicious Divine would by your means give us better Satisfaction in these Matters than I am able to do.

I am &c.

